

Hits Viet 'Background' Talks

From the Herald Tribune Bureau
WASHINGTON.

Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield yesterday denounced anonymous U. S. officials who were reported last week to have said that negotiations were not the only solution to the Viet Nam war. "What these officials suggest as the alternative," said Sen. Mansfield in a floor speech, "amounts to a total military solution, with the (Communist) Viet Cong being driven into a state of non-existence."

President Johnson, the Montana Democrat said, has made it clear, not once but a dozen times, that he seeks an end to the Vietnamese con-

flict through negotiations, and that negotiations as soon as possible are in the interest of this nation and of all concerned.

"That is his policy; that is United States official policy—period."

He castigated as "irresponsible" the unnamed sources who were reported Friday to believe that the growing military strength of the U. S., South Viet Nam and allies could shrink the power of the Communist guerillas to ineffectiveness.

"For an unnamed official source to engage in an idle discussion—if that is what it was—of an alternative policy of triumph by attrition, is, to

say the least, a breach of trust," Mr. Mansfield told his colleagues.

"With the President in the hospital it is, indeed, an inexcusable breach of trust."

The Democratic Senate leader, attacking widespread Washington official practice of holding "background sessions" with newsmen, said:

"Who are these official but unnamed sources? . . . Are (they) in the White House? Are they in the Defense Department? The State Department? The CIA? . . .

"Is it the head of a department who advances this new concept of Vietnamese policy? Or is it a chair-warmer at a Southeast Asia desk some-

where or a guard at the front door of the Pentagon or the State Department?"

The "official source" that Sen. Mansfield was referring to as the basis of the widespread reports last week is a very high Administration official who is extremely close to U. S. policy-making on Viet Nam.

He was reported to believe that, while the U. S. was no less willing to negotiate a settlement in Viet Nam with the Communists than heretofore, the growing American military strength in South Viet Nam put Washington in the position of being willing now to negotiate only a "workable" settlement.